

CONFIDENTIAL

28 August 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Stewart Alsop

1. Today I had lunch with Mr. Stewart Alsop at his invitation at the Metropolitan Club. We began by general conversation about Greece, past and present, and then turned to the Sino-Soviet situation. Alsop expressed puzzlement as to why the Soviets should be so concerned over the Chinese threat and I suggested that perhaps they considered the Chinese leadership so irrational and unpredictable that they feared what the Chinese might do when and if they achieve nuclear capability. Alsop remarked that Leo Volkov, on the Newsweek staff, was in regular touch with a second secretary of the Soviet embassy whose remarks on the Chinese problem reflected apparently deep and genuine concern.

2. Turning to the Agency's relations with Congress, Alsop was extremely complimentary on the skill with which the Director had handled his relations with the contending factions. He observed that the Agency seemed to be in excellent shape these days, but he had heard the view expressed among traveling journalists that our present generation of station chiefs were not of the same caliber as their predecessors. I said I didn't agree, remarking that they were perhaps less flamboyant and outgoing than their predecessors, but in my observation they were a thoroughly competent and professional group who were a bit more conservative and reticent than in the past, due largely to our desire to "present a low profile" and not ruffle the feathers of some of our ambassadors.

3. Turning to the journalistic scene, Alsop spoke with feeling about what he considered the deteriorating standards of the New York Times and said he was working on a piece on this subject.

CONFIDENTIAL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4. In response to Alsop's questions about the Green Beret case, I made the following points:

a. Since the case was under active investigation by the Army, I couldn't comment on any specifics;


b. However, it should be kept in mind that the Agency's coordinating responsibilities for the intelligence operations of the Armed Services in the field are only general and limited. On the chain of command problem, I called specific attention to Army Under Secretary Beal's letter to Representative Peter Rodino (D., N.J.), making clear that Special Forces personnel are not subject to orders from outside the military chain of command;

c. In answer to Alsop's question of why General Abrams had dealt so harshly with the defendants, I said I was not familiar with all the facts and could offer no explanation.

5. Alsop asked whether, in view of our limited coordinating role in such matters, it would be fair to infer that whatever the Special Forces may have done in this case, it had not been cleared with the Agency in advance. I said this was certainly a fair inference.

6. In response to Alsop's question of what the Agency would do if it discovered a dangerous double agent on its hands, I said that in some cases we might turn him over to local authorities and in others we might expose him, depending on the circumstances. I said that in accordance with a firm and longstanding Agency policy "liquidation" was definitely ruled out for very practical reasons - that in a free society it simply wasn't feasible, as the present Green Beret case seemed to demonstrate.

25X1A


JOHN M. MAURY
Legislative Counsel

Distribution:

DCI
DDCI
Ex-Dir/Compt
DDP
Mr. Bross
Mr. Houston
AC/FE
SAVA

Mr. Goodwin

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

1 - *Chm*